



News Release

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State identifies six probable swine flu (H1N1) cases in Washington

Samples heading to CDC tonight for confirmatory testing

OLYMPIA — The state Department of Health is announcing Washington now has six probable cases of swine flu (H1N1). Three probable cases are from King County, two from Snohomish County, and one from Spokane County.

After testing multiple flu samples since Monday, the department is now sending six samples it could not positively sub-type to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for further testing. Currently the CDC is the only public health lab in the country that can positively identify this virus.

“Health experts in our state are monitoring the situation and have a well-practiced plan in place,” said Governor Chris Gregoire. “I encourage all Washingtonians to follow the precautionary guidance of health officials and stay informed of the situation through county and state health resources.”

Public health agencies have been looking for cases in Washington to confirm whether or not the virus is in our state. It’s important for people who are sick with flu-like symptoms to stay home or go to a health care provider if they become seriously ill. Symptoms of swine flu include fever, muscle aches, cough, and sometimes trouble breathing.

“Tracking and responding to diseases is what public health agencies do best,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “We need the people of our state to help prevent the spread of germs by covering their coughs and staying home if they’re sick. We’ll get through this together.”

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Since requesting all positive type A flu samples from clinical labs in the state, about 70 have been shipped to the Shoreline laboratory for further testing. Lab workers continue to test samples as they arrive. The CDC plans to send testing materials, known as “reagents” to the state laboratory in the next several days. These materials will allow workers to test for the new swine flu strain.

Almost 100 cases of this new flu strain have been confirmed in 10 U.S. states —Texas, California, Ohio, New York, Kansas, Nevada, Arizona, Michigan, Massachusetts, and Indiana. One death has been reported in Texas. Cases have also been reported in several countries.

[Swine influenza](http://www.doh.wa.gov/swineflu) (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/swineflu>) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza virus. This new strain is being spread by person-to-person contact. There’s no risk from eating properly cooked pork or pork products.

There’s currently no vaccine to prevent swine flu, but antiviral medications can treat it. These are generally used to prevent serious flu complications and work best if started soon after getting sick. Health care providers determine whether or not a person with influenza needs to take antivirals.

Within the next several days, the state expects to get a supply of antiviral medication from the federal government as a precaution. The medication will be enough to treat about 230,000 people, if needed. The stockpile also includes gloves and other medical supplies.

[Information on swine flu](http://www.doh.wa.gov/swineflu) (www.doh.wa.gov/swineflu) — translated in several languages — is on the Department of Health’s Web site. There’s also information on how to [prevent the spread of germs](http://www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook/prevent.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook/prevent.htm).

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at http://www.doh.wa.gov for a healthy dose of information.
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